

This article was downloaded by: [Timothy J. Fox]

On: 21 August 2014, At: 09:42

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Jung Journal: Culture & Psyche

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ujun20>

Saints Preserve Us

Timothy J. Fox

Published online: 21 Aug 2014.

To cite this article: Timothy J. Fox (2014) Saints Preserve Us, Jung Journal: Culture & Psyche, 8:3, 93-97, DOI: [10.1080/19342039.2014.930029](https://doi.org/10.1080/19342039.2014.930029)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/19342039.2014.930029>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

Saints Preserve Us

TIMOTHY J. FOX

Review of: Sally J. Cornelison, *Art and the Relic Cult of St. Antoninus in Renaissance Florence*, Visual Culture in Early Modernity Series, Surrey, England, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2012. 13 color plates and 88 other illustrations.

In 1891, C. G. Jung took the second “conscious journey” of his young life—a trip to Sachseln, Switzerland, where his father was vacationing. “While there, I paid a visit to the hermitage of Flüel and the relics of Brother Klaus [Nicholas of Flüe], who by then had been beatified,” Jung recalled decades later in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (1989, 78; McLynn 1996, 34). The visit inspired him to ponder sainthood and its implications for those imperfect, mortal, yet beloved beings who share the earth with the holy one. “How could his wife and children have borne having a saint for a husband and father, when it was precisely my father’s faults and inadequacies that made him particularly lovable to me?” he wondered. “‘Yes,’ I thought, ‘how could anyone live with a saint?’” Jung’s answer was “that it was impossible, and therefore Klaus had to become a hermit.” He then imagined himself as an archetypal hermitic saint, with “the family in one house, while I would live some distance away, in a hut with a pile of books and a writing table and an open fire where I would roast chestnuts and cook my soup on a tripod” (79).

Quaint as it is, Jung’s imagined self-as-saint resembles the carefully constructed image of at least one real saint—Antonio di Niccolò Pierozzi, an archbishop of Florence, Italy, who was canonized as St. Antoninus in 1523. Antoninus’s life, death, and symbolic life after

death are explored in art historian and professor Sally Cornelison’s *Art and the Relic Cult of St. Antoninus in Renaissance Florence*. Through her meticulous research, Cornelison shows that the traditional narrative of Antoninus’s life—a narrative that has been left to us through the saint’s own writings, those of various hagiographers, and, most importantly for the author, works of art—is only partly true. While he was termed “the humblest of men,” a saint frequently shown or described cloistered away with his books, who preferred “piety and simplicity in art and architecture,” he also promoted “magnificence and the need for wealthy patrons to turn attention to building, renovating, and decorating churches, monasteries, and convents,” including San Marco, his beloved convent where he spent the last two decades of his life (Cornelison 2012, 15–16). Antoninus thus was a pragmatist who “was not unwilling to bend mendicant ideals of poverty so that San Marco and his archdiocese could meet the obligations of the faithful they served” (11–12). For that reason, he was part of the social and political life of fifteenth-century Florence as well as the city’s religious community.

Cornelison writes that these “myriad discrepancies . . . should be viewed . . . as efforts on the part of St. Antoninus’s hagiographers to make the saint’s life conform to the changing political and ecclesiastical realities and agendas of grand ducal Florence and the Dominican Order” (2012, 33). The contrast is compelling, however, for what it tells us about how we project idealized archetypal images onto historical figures. Just as Jung projected his archetypal image of the hermitic saint onto Brother Klaus, in a process of ritualistic objectification, countless followers of Antoninus made projections onto him. From this point, it is not too great a leap to the

development of a “relic cult” that collects and ascribes intercessory powers to saintly objects—the hair, clothing, possessions, and even body parts of the objectified person. In Antoninus’s case, the saint’s relic cult grew between his death in the spring of 1459 and the movement of his body to an opulent new tomb 130 years later.

The tension between these conflicting representations of Antoninus is the thread that runs throughout Cornelison’s masterful book, which focuses more on what happened after the saint’s death than on his life. The book’s cornerstones are the “key elements of Florence’s shared cityscape”—the San Marco convent, where Antoninus was interred several days after his death, and the lavishly built and decorated chapel to which his body was removed and reinterred in 1589 (Cornelison 2012, 2). The mythmaking began with his death on May 2, 1459, a date that was synchronous with the eve of the feast of the Ascension and a day that Pope Pius II happened to be in Florence. It was a “felicitous coincidence that underscored [Antoninus’s] holiness by linking his entry into heaven with that of the resurrected Christ,” Cornelison notes, while the pope’s presence provided for “an instant and prestigious funeral cortège for the ascetic Dominican friar” (17). Antoninus’s body lay in state for eight days, during which time it showed little evidence of decay. While this was likely the result of treatment with oil, perfumes, and other substances, those who visited to mourn the beloved archbishop and to seek his intercession viewed the body’s good condition as evidence of his sanctity. In addition, several miracles were reported by those who touched Antoninus’s body before it was placed in its tomb.

At his request, Antoninus’s body was finally buried in San Marco, dressed in humble

clothing, with his tomb itself flush with the ground. Cornelison notes that this last fact is significant, as it indicates a “mendicant willingness to be stepped on by the living, thus symbolizing the fate of all humans to return to the earth” (2012, 50). The body’s treatment also resonates with one of the more common saintly intercessions for which Antoninus’s believers prayed: help with infertility. Humbly returned to terra firma, the faithful hoped Antoninus’s body would bear symbolic fruit for barren women. At the opposite extreme, stories of the levitating saint are another key part of the saint’s hagiography. One such account is memorialized in the 1516 painting *Miracle of St. Antoninus*, part of a triptych now on display at Pistoia’s Museo Civico. In the painting, a mortally wounded child lies before an altar. As blood pools beneath his head, Antoninus floats serenely above the scene. The saint is literally “otherworldly,” not bound by the laws of gravity that restrain lesser Christians. What’s more, the painting also shows an identical child, unwounded and standing before the dying boy as his mother welcomes the child back to life: Antoninus’s intercession has saved the boy. Although the motif of a dead person appearing in the same work as his or her living figure was a common one going back to the fourteenth century, the image is especially powerful in light of the split, dual aspects of Antoninus’s hagiography—the saint caught between heaven and earth.

Antoninus’s funeral and interment at San Marco were more elaborate than most Florentine funerals; however, they paled in comparison to the “Medici pomp” that accompanied his “translation” to the new chapel in 1589, at the florescence of his relic cult (Cornelison 2012, 253). On April 15, Cardinal Alessandro de’ Medici—who had

succeeded Antoninus as Archbishop of Florence—brothers Averardo and Antonio Salviati, whose family was tied through marriage to the powerful Medici; San Marco's prior; and the senior friars at San Marco gathered to exhume Antoninus's body, clean it, and dress it elaborately. As Cornelison notes, his new clothing "was a far cry from the Dominican habit in which Antoninus was dressed as a friar, as Florence's archbishop, and in which he was buried in 1459" (259). Symbolically resurrected, Antoninus's body—"the miracle-working core of his cult"—made the two-and-a-half mile trip through the heart of Florence in a procession led by Medici and the Salviatis (257).

Like his translation ceremony, Antoninus's new resting place was richer and more sumptuous than the saint's ascetic persona would have liked. His adherence to a vow of poverty did not match the 1589 chapel's elaborate—and costly—decoration, with its colorful paintings, dramatic sculptures, and textile art. Cornelison, who remarkably tells the story of the new chapel's construction and decoration using primary source material, such as bills and receipts for work completed, notes that a contemporary dubbed the chapel "one of the most wonderful things in existence" (2012, 117). The floors were made of expensive, multicolored marble, while numerous paintings, sculptures, textiles, and bronze reliefs captured key moments of the saint's life. Lavish as it was, the new chapel mostly focused more on Antoninus's humble, saintly actions of helping the poor and sick, entering the Dominican order, and preaching. Nevertheless, his miracles were included in some of the chapel's artworks. For example, Alessandro Allori's frescos *Miracle of the Washbasin* and *St. Antoninus Blessing Dante and Marietta Castiglione* both show Antoninus miraculously

repairing "broken vessels." In the first fresco, he repairs a shattered washbasin that a woman has dropped; in the second, he performs the only fertility miracle that took place in his lifetime, repairing the broken vessel of Marietta Castiglione's hitherto barren womb (178). The frescos thus neatly capture both the mundane and the miraculous aspects of Antoninus's hagiography.

As stunning as the many works of art are individually, their true power in the creation and maintenance of Antoninus's relic cult and mythology lies in how they work together within the space of the new chapel. "The typological pairing of the crypt's altar narratives anticipates the entire chapel's iconographical focus on the themes of death, resurrection, and redemption that are central to its function as a saint's and a lay burial chapel," Cornelison



Alessandro Allori, *Miracle of the Washbasin*, fresco, 1583–88. St. Antoninus Chapel, San Marco, Florence. (S.S.P.S.A.E e per il Polo Museale della città di Firenze - Gabinetto Fotografico.)



Alessandro Allori, *St. Antoninus Blessing Dante and Marietta Castiglione*, fresco, 1583–88. St. Antoninus Chapel, San Marco, Florence.

(S.S.P.S.A.E e per il Polo Museale della città di Firenze - Gabinetto Fotografico.)

writes, alluding to the fact that members of the Salviati family are also buried in the chapel (2012, 155). Paintings guide viewers' eyes around the space and to other artworks, including sculptures, that depict scenes from Antoninus's life, as all of the art works together to focus attention on the sculptor Giambologna's "bronze effigy" of the saint, which—again—"presents a very different image of the saint than the familiar . . . humble friar fifteenth-century Florentines knew and loved" (208). This dynamism mirrors the fluid portrait of Renaissance Italy Cornelison paints—a world in which religion, government, politics, and wealth swirled together and influenced each other.

The lesson of Cornelison's stunning book is that the process of ritualistic objectification

Florentines used in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to immortalize Antoninus is not unlike the way we ascribe archetypal identities and symbolic meaning to the personages and relics of those who have gone before us. The enormous popularity of genealogy is evidence of our deep need to "know" our ancestors and to assign stories to them, however apocryphal, that, in turn, give our own lives greater meaning. Cornelison's book uses the tools of genealogy, archeology, architecture, and religious history to peel back the layers of Antoninus's fascinating life and life-after-death. It inspired me to think more carefully about the heroes of my own personal narrative—parents and grandparents, friends and lovers—to find the humanity that is often obscured by a façade of constructed "memory." *Art and the Relic Cult of St. Antoninus in Renaissance Florence* is a fine addition to Ashgate's Visual Culture in Early Modernity Series, and it will be an equally fine addition to the bookshelf of any serious art lover or anyone interested in exploring the power of myth and memory in our own all-too-human lives.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Jung, C. G. 1989. *Memories, dreams, reflections*. Recorded and edited by Aniela Jaffé. Trans. Clara Winston. Revised edition. New York: Vintage Books.
- McLynn, Frank. 1996. *Carl Gustav Jung*. London: Transworld Publishers.

TIMOTHY J. FOX, MA, is a professional writer and editor in St. Louis, Missouri. He holds a BA in Psychology and an MA in English Literature, both from the University of Missouri-Columbia. He is co-author (with Duane R. Sneddeker) of *From the Palaces to the Pike: Visions of the 1904 World's Fair* (Missouri Historical Society Press, 1997), a photographic tour of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition. His reviews and articles have appeared in various publications, including *Gateway Heritage* and the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, and his essay on

public housing and postmodernism is forthcoming in *The Confluence: A Regional Studies Journal*. Correspondence: tjfstlouis66@sbcglobal.net.

ABSTRACT

Antonio di Niccolò Pierozzi (St. Antoninus, 1389–1459) inspired a relic cult that long outlived the one-time archbishop of Florence, Italy. After his death, he was buried at San Marco, his Dominican convent. Antoninus's remains were exhumed 130 years later and "translated" to an elaborate new chapel. Though dubbed "the humblest of men," Antoninus was deeply involved in Florentine life, suggesting an internal struggle between the saint's public persona of the ascetic and his other persona of the "man about town." This conflict is further demonstrated in the elaborate chapel to which his body was moved in 1589, a masterpiece of Renaissance architecture, painting, sculpture, and textiles that is at odds with Antoninus's ascetic persona. Art historian Sally J. Cornelison's *Art and the Relic Cult of St. Antoninus in Renaissance Florence* takes readers behind the scenes of both burial sites, revealing a complex world where art, religion, government, politics, and wealth swirled together and influenced each other.

KEY WORDS

Alessandro Allori, Francesco Botticini, Brother Klaus, Dominican Observant Order, Florence, Italy, Nicholas of Flüe, Antonio di Niccolò Pierozzi, Pope Pius II, relic cult, St. Antoninus

Fill the Void

BETH BARMACK

Review of: *Fill the Void (Lemale et ha'halal)*, written and directed by Rama Burshtein, 2012.

Demeter and Kore, mother and daughter, extend feminine consciousness both upwards and downwards. They add an "older and younger, stronger and weaker" dimension to it and widen out the narrowly limited conscious mind bound in space and time, giving it intimations of a greater and more

comprehensive personality which has a share in the eternal course of things . . . the psyche pre-existent to consciousness.

C. G. Jung
1941/1968, CW 9i, ¶316

On the surface *Fill the Void* seems like a simple story—a timeless fairytale—taking place in an Orthodox Jewish family in Tel Aviv. We meet two sisters, eighteen-year-old Shira and twenty-eight-year-old Esther; their parents, Rivka and Aharon Mendelman; Esther's husband, Yochay; and a wise Rabbi. In fact, the film is filled with nuances, gestures, and subtleties, which creates depth and offers multiple perspectives. We are invited to witness the interplay of generations, the strength of longing, and the constellating power of the family archetype working to replace a missing mother.

The void is introduced early in the film, when Esther dies in childbirth. The extended community encourages Yochay to remarry, in essence, to flee from the primary agonies evoked by such severe loss. He considers a match that his mother encourages to a widow in Belgium. But Rivka cannot bear the idea of a horrendous double loss—both daughter and grandson. In an act of refusal, she searches for a solution that would keep them both in Tel Aviv. Right from the beginning of the film, the interplay between individual and collective consciousness is highlighted.

In an intricate comingling of life and death, we encounter Esther's baby, Mordechay, held gently in his father's arms. One hour after his mother's funeral, he is taken to his briss, the circumcision ceremony that initiates him into his future life as an Orthodox Jew. We register the infant's silent trauma as the family stares down at him from above, as if looking into a grave. The aerial perspective heightens the